

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Editor:

J. C. CHOATE

Associate Editor

SUNNY DAVID

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Venereal Diseases

It is God's will that man and woman should satisfy their sexual urges within the framework of marriage. There is nothing wrong with sex, nothing immoral about it, nothing dirty about it—rather it is good and right and beautiful and ordained of God himself, but only on his terms. Going to the scriptures we read concerning Jesus, "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He said unto them Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery : and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." (Matthew 19 : 3-9). From these verses we learn the following facts :

1. Those who came to Jesus were not really interested in the truth on these matters but were merely trying to tempt him to say something that they could use by which they could condemn him.
2. Jesus reminds them that there was a time back under the law when because of the hardness of their hearts that Moses had tolerated the practice of them putting away their wives but he hastens to say that from the beginning it was not God's will that they do so.
3. In the beginning God made them male and female and it was his decree that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and that they should be one flesh.
4. God further decreed that what he had joined together that no man should put asunder.
5. Jesus thus warned that should one put away his wife and marry another, except it be for fornication, then he would be committing the sin of adultery and also the one that married her would be likewise guilty of adultery.

So from the foregoing we conclude that since God made man and woman then he made them with sexual urges and drives. He likewise knew that those would need to be satisfied and to take care of this he ordained that man and woman should fulfil these desires in marriage. He stipulated that there should be but one man and one woman involved in marriage and that it should be for life, or until one or the other had died. At the death of the husband or wife, then the living party would be free to marry again, provided they married someone that was free to marry, that is, someone that was not already married to another. Again, he

has provided that if one was married and his wife was unfaithful to him through the sin of fornication, then he could put her away and marry again, provided he married someone that was free to marry. The same would be true if it was the other way around, that is, if the husband was unfaithful then his wife would be free to marry again under the same conditions. On the other hand, the guilty party could not marry again without committing the sin of adultery.

All of this is to say that God has arranged for man's sexual needs and as long as man and woman will abide by his wishes then they can satisfy all of their needs, remain happy in so doing, and at the same time abide by God's law on marriage.

Sad to say, however, but in today's modern world more and more men and women, and especially young people, are refusing to abide by God's law on marriage. There are divorces and remarriages, men and women living with each other outside of marriage, and all kinds of sexual immorality going on. In more recent years there has been a worldwide phenomenon going on inasmuch as there has been an open rebellion against the moral code that seems to have governed society in general. Of course there has always been a certain percentage who rejected the laws of moral purity, but with the coming of this new rebellion then it seems that it has affected people everywhere to one extent or the other. People have become obsessed with sex. Censorship has been relaxed with respect to movies, magazines, and books. Abortion has become a common thing. It has become rather sociable now for young people to live together outside of marriage. Fornication and adultery are not frowned on like they were at one time. And so it goes on in today's modern world.

But how does God look on all of this? He looks on it as he has always looked on it. He still maintains that all sexual activity should be limited to marriage, that there is to be but one man and one woman in marriage and it is until death. What about those who are unwilling to abide by God's will on these matters as they go on with their sexual activities outside of marriage and they divorce and remarry for every cause. Then

they are immoral and they are living in sin. The world may accept them, even some religious people may approve of this, but still they are in sin because they are guilty of fornication, adultery, and whatever other acts they may be engaging in that are contrary to God's law. (1 Corinthians 6 : 9, 10; Galatians 5 : 19-21).

Not only is that true, but nature itself has a way of dealing with those who disobey God's will. For instance, one may drink and in so doing then he may become a drunkard, damage his mind, get killed while drunk, or any number of other things may happen to him because of his sin. One may take drugs and likewise end up a victim of such. What about smoking and the cancer that it causes and numerous other ailments that results from it? Also, we could go on and on to show that when one goes against God's wishes, and opposes likewise the law of nature, then he must be prepared to suffer the consequences. The same is true with sexual immorality. Not only does one have the wrath of God upon him when he becomes immoral; not only does he have to suffer all kinds of emotional problems and heartbreaks through promiscuous conduct; not only do others have to suffer, including little children, when he engages in such activities; but also he and those who participate in sexual misbehaviour with him will have to face the possibility of contacting venereal diseases like gonorrhea and syphilis. Perhaps this is why Paul said, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price : therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6 : 18-20).

It is true that with modern day condoms, penecillian, etc., even these people may go free in some cases and not have to pay for their sinful activity. In spite of all that, still many do contract these diseases. And once one has become afflicted with a venereal disease then it may be passed on to babies when they are born to a victim, as well as to other sexual contacts. Many of these people may be ignorant of these diseases, or may be ignorant of the cures

that are available for them, and in the end they may lose their minds or die terrible deaths as a result of their sin.

Please notice here that those who have a God ordained marriage, and who remain morally pure, are never faced with these diseases. That means that it pays to live a good moral life. But who is it that is faced with venereal disease? Those who are immoral. That also means that one must pay the penalty for his sexual misbehaviour. But suppose one is able to escape the consequences of his sexual sins, that is, he manages to get by without contacting one of these diseases. In that case he may have to suffer the consequences in some other way. Regardless of what happens, there is one thing for sure, and that is, when one breaks God's law then sooner or later he will have to suffer for it. The Bible says that fornicators, adulterers, and immoral people in general, will eventually be cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 21 : 8). The scriptures also say that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap (Galatians 6 : 7, 8), and that the wages of sin is death. (Romans 6 : 23). The Apostle Paul adds this reminder, "But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done : and there is no respect of persons." (Colossians 3 : 25). You don't have to believe that, but eventually you will face it in reality. You would be far better off if you respected God's wishes in marriage and in regard to all other matters.



**associate
editorial**

How Do I Know I Am Saved ?

Recently in a Bible class some one put this question. I believe this is a very important question for all of us. How do I know I

am saved? or, What is the assurance of my salvation? How do you know you are saved, that is, if you believe or claim to be saved?

There are plenty of people who would explain this by saying that one's feeling is the evidence or the proof of his salvation. In other words, they believe, when a person accepts Jesus as his personal saviour then this brings good feelings into one's heart, because he feels that he had been forgiven. But the question is, how can one know if his feelings are right or wrong? Feelings come as result of one's education or knowledge. Some one may feel happy upon hearing a certain news. But if he did not learn the truth or was misinformed then his feelings would be wrong, and his happy-feeling would not change the truth, like in the case of the rich fool. (Luke 12:15-21). There is no place in the Bible where we are taught by a command or an example that one is saved by his feelings. In fact, the Bible teaches very opposit to this view (Matthew 7:21-27). The emphasis of the scripture is not on feelings but rather on doing.

But then there are some who emphasize upon having an experience of a new birth. Thus, a person who have had experienced a new birth is saved, they believe. This experince of new birth also include in it the mental acceptance of Christ as one's personal saviour, as we have already seen, which results in good feeling, but the real experince is brought about by an extraordinary event, such as a dream or a vision, which later becomes a testimony of this "born again" person. For instance, here is an example: a young man, who also claimed to be a preacher, while visiting with me said, "I went to attend the meeting where the preacher was telling how Jesus died for our sins...he exhorted people to accept Christ as their personal saviour, and said that those who would want to be saved should raise their hands so that he would pray for them...I accepted Christ and raised my hand, and after the prayer the meeting was over...that night I could not sleep. My sins began to come before me one by one, as though I was seeing a movie...and then I saw Christ on the cross...and I began to cry...the following morning I felt so good and happy." Many other such examples can also be given. But all such "experiences" are

based on one's own thinking and imaginations. Stories like these sound good, and men like to hear them, but these have nothing to do with the real new birth the Bible talk about.

In the New Testament of Christ we do read about the importance and necessity of being born again, but the word 'experience' is a human addition to the Lord's command. Christ said in John 3:3,5 "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God...Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." He didn't say one must have an experience of new birth, such as coming through a dream or a vision, etc., but rather he said that one must be born of water and of the Spirit. Which means, one must be baptized in water (going down into water and coming up out of it), as the Spirit directs through God's word. (1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 8:36; Mark 16:16).

The fact, however, is that God's word is very plain in telling us how we can surely know we are saved. Just as we know that Christ died on the cross for our sins, or he will come again to judge the world, by reading scriptures such as 1 Peter 2:24; Acts 17:31, etc., and we believe, the Bible is the word of God. The same Bible also tells us that Christ after his death on the cross became the author of eternal salvation *unto all them that obey him*. (Hebrews 5:8,9). This definitely indicates that there are certain specific commands of Christ which *must* be obeyed to be saved, and as a result of one's obedience to his commands one can be saved. It is just that simple. So, what are those commands? Jesus said, one should believe in him and be baptized to be saved. (Mark 16:16). Peter, one of the apostles of Christ, in Acts 2:38 commanded the believers to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. (Luke 13:3,5). Now, when they obeyed these commands weren't they saved? Yes, certainly they were. Because Christ had promised to save those who would believe in him and would be baptized. They didn't have to feel or experience something extraordinary, but the assurance of their salvation was the promise of Christ. And the same is true today. When we believe in Christ, and repent of our sins, and are baptized for the forgiveness of our sins, as the saviour require, then we know surely we

are saved. And the inspired writer of the New Testament says, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:47). But to remain saved and thus to receive the crown of life at His coming we must be faithful to Him always. (Revelation 2:10).

Satan

Wayne Jackson

THE ORIGIN OF SATAN—Though the Bible gives no detailed account of the origin of Satan, sufficient suggestions are found to draw some reasonable conclusions. The devil did not exist eternally, hence did have an origin, as the following indicates.

First, it is certainly clear that Satan is not of the nature of deity. Deity is all powerful (Gen. 17:1); Deity cannot be restrained (Job. 42:2). On the contrary, however, the devil is clearly no omnipotent as evidenced by the following: (a) His power to afflict was limited (Job. 1:12; 2:6); (b) When rebuked by the messenger of Jehovah, he had to remain silent (Zech. 3:2); (c) His authority over world kingdoms was "delivered" to him (Lk. 4:6); (d) He had to ask for the apostles (Lk. 22:31); (e) He can "snatch" no one from the Lord's hand (Jn. 10:28); (f) When resisted, he flees (Jas. 4:7); and (g) When cast into hell he will be powerless to resist (Rev. 20:10). Moreover, Scripture plainly affirms that He that is in us (i.e., God) is *greater* than he (i.e., Satan) that is in the world. (I Jn. 4:4) So, to sum up: Deity is all powerful. But Satan is not. Thus, he is not of the deity class.

Secondly, all things, and *beings* that are not of the deity class are the result of creation—"...for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers" (Col. 1:16). This would include Satan as he originally was. It might be mentioned also at this point that all created things had their origin at some time during the creation week of Genesis 1. This

Moses states in Exodus 20:11. "...For in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is..." This included the great host of angels. Incidentally, the angels "must have been created at the very beginning of the first day of creation, for Job 38:6, 7 tells of their singing and of their shout of joy at the creation of the earth" (John C. Whitcomb, Jr., *The Early Earth*, p. 43).

THE FALL OF SATAN—All things, as they were originally created, were good. "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). "By the application of the term 'good' to everything that God made, and the repetition of the word with the emphasis 'very' at the close of the whole creation, the existence of anything evil in the creation of God is absolutely denied, and the hypothesis entirely refuted, that the six days' work merely subdued and fettered an ungodly, evil principle, which had already forced its way into it" (C.F. Keil *The Pentateuch*, I, p. 67). This means that the being known as Satan was not created as Satan (i.e., as an adversary). He was created good, but he became bad.

If Satan was created good, but is now evil, it is obvious that he fell. The Bible seems to indicate that the devil was the very first sinner. John wrote: "...the devil sinneth from the beginning..." (I Jn. 3:8). W.E. Vine says: "There is stress upon the phrase 'from the beginning.' Sin began when Satan first sinned" (*The Epistles of John*, p. 56). See also Guy N. Woods' commentary on this passage.

There are several indications in the Bible that a rebellion occurred in heaven at some remote period of antiquity. In the book of Job Eliphaz says of God: "He puts no trust even in his servants; And against his angels he charges error" (4:18). Barnes notes: "Language like this would hardly be employed unless there was a belief that even the holiness of the angels was not incorruptible, and that there had been some revolt there among a part, which rendered it possible that others might revolt also..." (*Commentary on Job*, p. Lxiii). Two passages in the NT speak of such a rebellion. "...God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be

reserved unto judgment" (II Pet. 2:4). "And angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). Angels were obviously subject to some kind of heavenly law, for they sinned and sin is transgression of law (I Jn. 3:4). All evidence points to Satan as the instigator and leader in this revolt. Also, let it be noted that not all of these rebellious spirits were confined in a place of punishment (cf. Eph. 2:2, 6:12).

In I Timothy 3:6 Paul prohibits a novice being appointed an elder "lest being puffed up he fall into the condemnation of the devil." There is some discussion among scholars as to how the genitive *tou diabolou* (of the devil) should be taken. Some see it as subjective in the sense of "the devil's trap of condemnation" into which the novice falls. The expression "snare of the devil" in verse 7 is relied upon as support for this view. More likely, however, the words "of the devil" ought to be taken as an objective genitive, suggesting the sense, "Lest he be involved in the condemnation which the devil incurred," or the "judgment pronounced on the devil..." (*Expositor's Greek Testament*, IV, p. 114). Alford, Wiesinger (in Olshausen), and others strongly argue that *krima* (judgment, condemnation) in verse 6 can only be used of a judgment into which the devil came. If this be correct, we have here a specific allusion to Satan's original fall.

Perhaps a word should be said about certain passages which are thought to shed light on Satan's fall, but which, upon closer examination, are hardly conclusive in that regard.

(1) Isaiah 14:12 contains a reference to "Lucifer" (KJV), an epithet of the king of Babylon (vs. 4). Jerome and others of the church "fathers" took this to be a reference to Satan and such a notion is popular today, but there is no evidence of an allusion to the devil in this passage.

(2) Some have asserted that Ezekiel's "lamentation over the king of Tyre" (28:11-19) is a picture of Satan and his fall in Eden. But as Ellison notes: "Those who implicitly hold this view have generally little idea of how unknown it is in wider Christian circles,

or of how little basis there is for it in fact" (*Ezekiel: The Man And His Message*, p. 108).

(3) When the seventy disciples returned from a preaching tour they declared: "Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in thy name," to which He replied: "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven" (Lk. 10:17, 18). Though some see this a reference to the devil's initial apostasy, Plummer says: "The aorist [tense of the verb "fallen"] indicates the coincidence between the success of the Seventy and Christ's vision of Satan's overthrow...; it refers to the success of the disciples regarded as a symbol and earnest of the complete overthrow of Satan" (*ICC on Luke*, p. 278).

(4) In Revelation 12:7-9 John sees a vision of war in heaven between Michael and his angels and the devil and his angels; the result being that Satan was cast down to earth. In harmony with the nature of the book and its general context, this is a *symbolic* description of the battle between the church of Jesus Christ and the forces of Satan. That it does not refer to a fall back near the beginning of time is clear from the fact that Satan was "cast down," or overcome, "because of the blood of the Lamb" (12:10, 11). It is not impossible, though, that an ancient conflict might have formed the basis of the imagery here employed, even though the reference is not specifically to such an event.

SATAN'S MISSION—The devil's mission, very simply stated, is to destroy the human race in hell. It is little wonder he has been denominated by inspiration as the "Destroyer" (Rev. 9:11). He attempted ruin of humanity by the temptation of Christ (Mt. 4:1-11), and the seduction of His holy apostles (Lk. 22:31). Though that plan failed (with the exception of Judas—Jn. 17:12), he now nevertheless "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Pet. 5:8).

But how does this Enemy work today? Thou Satan was permitted to operate supernaturally in former ages of history (as in the case of demon possessions of the 1st century—Mt. 12:22-29; cf. Ex. 7:11, 22; II Thes. 2:9), which was apparently for the purpose of enabling the Lord and His disciples to demonstrate the superior

urity of divine power over Satanic power, he cannot operate in a miraculous fashion today. If the devil could miraculously dominate men today, there would be, as Rubel Shelly has observed, "a manifest 'imbalance' of spiritual power among men with the scales tipped to Satan's advantage" (*Occultism*, p. 7). Professor L.M. Sweet affirms that there is no evidence "that Satan is able to any extent to introduce disorder into the physical universe or directly operate in the lives of men. On the contrary," he continues, "it is perfectly evident that Satan's power consists principally in his ability to deceive. It is interesting and characteristics that according to the Bible Satan is fundamentally a liar and his kingdom is a kingdom founded upon lies and deceit" (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, IV, p. 2694).

The New Testament affords evidence aplenty for this. For instance, the Deceiver: (1) Delights in blinding the minds of the unbelieving that the light of the gospel should not dawn upon them (II Cor. 4:4). (2) To accomplish this he does not hesitate to transform himself into an angel of light, along with his ministers who pretend to be ministers of righteousness (II Cor. 11:14, 15). (3) When people are inclined not to believe the truth, the devil takes the gospel from their hearts (Lk. 8:12). (4) He is full of trickery. He has his snares (I Tim. 3:7), and employs his "wiles"—"a deliberate planning or system" (Eph. 4: 14; 6:11; M.R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, p. 859). (5) Those converted from the power of Satan unto God are thus turned from darkness to light (Acts 26:18). (6) Accordingly, Christians must constantly be on guard "that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (II Cor. 2:11).

Though we must never under-estimate the power of Satan, it is equally certain that we must likewise never over-estimate him. By employing the same weapon as used by Christ—"it is written" (Mt. 4:4, 7, 10)—we can become "more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37). Jehovah can grant us victories over the Destroyer and his kingdom (Rom. 16:10; I Jn. 5:4), and by His might, we take courage and press on!

SATAN'S DESTINY—The Lord Jesus Christ will be completely victorious over Satan. He was manifested "that he might

destroy the works of the devil" (I Jn. 3:8). The eternal punishment of hell "is prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt. 25:41). And into that horrible place he will be cast and be "tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10). The promise of Genesis 3:15 will then be totally fulfilled—"...he [the woman's seed, i.e., Christ] shall bruise thy [the serpent's] head..."—what great rejoicing will then occur!

He That Loveth Me

—but you and I are not. **Joe Sponagle**

Jesus said, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father and I will love him and will manifest myself unto him. Judas (not Iscariot) saith unto him, Lord, what is come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." John 14:21-23.

There are many who pretend to love Christ, both in the church and out. But Christ is never fooled by our pretense. He knows us inside out and outside in, upside down and down side up. For David said, "O Jehovah, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou searchest out my path and my lying down and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue but, Lo, O Jehovah, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before and laid thy hand upon me." Ps. 139:1-6. Yes, we may fool ourselves and others but we can never fool the Lord for one minute.

Do you really love Christ? If so, how great is that love? Is there a way to measure our love for Christ? Jesus saith to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these? He

saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord: thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Tend my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep." John 21:15-17. Three times Jesus asked Peter if he loved him. Peter had denied Christ three times.

If Jesus were to ask us the question, lovest thou me? how would we reply? Jesus said the one who loves him keeps his commandments. Are you keeping his commandments? Have you obeyed the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation, Rom. 1:16? Without obedience to Christ and his gospel there is no salvation. II Thes, 1:7-9. If we have had enough faith and love to obey the gospel of Christ are we still obeying him? Jesus said the first and greatest commandment is to love God. Matt. 22:36-39. We must continue to have faith in Christ and love for Christ. When Jesus wrote to the church in Ephesus he said, "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love. Remember therefore whence thou art fallen and repent and do the first works." Rev. 2:4-5. These saints had left their first love. Many today have left their first love and they no longer care about Christ and doing his will. They have backslidden. Love must be cultivated if it continues to grow.

Jesus said that obedience to him is a test of our love. It is impossible to love Christ without obeying Christ. For Jesus said, if ye love me ye will keep my commandments. John 14:15. Love for Christ will motivate us to teach the lost the gospel of Christ. Love for Christ will motivate us to care for the fatherless and widows in their affliction. Love for Christ will motivate us to be in Bible classes on Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. Love will motivate us to be faithful in our worship of the Father. Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt. 18:20. Our absence from Bible class and worship, when we could be there, is proof that we do not

love the Lord. If we do not love him enough to be with him here we surely would not want to be with him forever in eternity, would we?

Our love for Christ will motivate us to keep his commandments in our relationship to our husband, wife, children, neighbours, brethren, enemies, government and etc. Our failure to keep his commandments is either due to ignorance, which is no excuse, Acts 17:30, or to weakness, or to a lack of love for him. When we fail to love we will also fail to keep his commandments, for Jesus said, on these two commandments hangeth the whole law and the prophets. Matt. 22:40.

God and Christ do not make their abode with those who do not love them and keep their commandments. As Isaiah said, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear." Isa. 59:2. Thus it is not hard to tell who God and Christ dwell in and who they do not dwell in. Confessing Christ or saying, Lord, Lord, does not mean that Christ is in such a one, whether they are in the church or not. Some who have been immersed have only gotten wet, they have not been converted and they do not love the Lord. For as Jesus said, by their fruits ye shall know them. Matt. 7:16.

Those who do not bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. 5: 22-24, do not have the Spirit in them and they are not walking by the Spirit. And if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ,, he is none of his. Rom. 8:9.

Brethren who murmur and complain about doing the work of the Lord or spending the Lord's money to do the Lord's work do not love the Lord. Those who are immersed into Christ have surrendered their lives and money to the Lord. Thus what is their's is his. And into his service do they gladly give it. As Jesus said, freely ye received, freely give, Matt. 10:8 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights. James 1:17.

Do you love the Lord? Does God, Christ and the Holy Spirit abide in you? If so, you will manifest the teachings of Christ in

your life and attitude. You will be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Your life will be rich, as God works in you and through you. The love of God will be manifested in your relationship to God and others.

Giving Comfort to the Enemy

Johnny Ramsey

Some of the most revealing Bible verses tell of misconduct on the part of God's children. David caused the heathen to blaspheme (2 Sam. 12). Hypocritical Jewish leaders had the same effect upon the Gentiles of the first century (Rom. 2). But, the passage that powerfully spotlights this situation is Lam. 2:16, where pagan power laugh at the demise of Jerusalem, crying :

"THIS IS THE DAY WE HAVE WAITED FOR!"

In our generation members of the church who become publicity items by their unfair business practices and immoral activities truly bring reproach upon the cause of our Lord! No greater error could possible enter our lives than anything that would cause the demons in hell to rejoice!

Samson compromised in such a manner as to injure God's plan. Ahab and Jezebel brought a shoddy leadership to Israel. King Saul obeyed the voice of the people, and thus displeased his Maker. Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin, thought his own plans much better than heaven's way (1 Kgs. 12:28). Herod, in Acts 12, withstood the Scriptures, mocked the apostles and exalted himself, but his glory was short-lived! Pilate and Judas encouraged Satan's evil plot against Jesus, but the Christ ultimately triumphed, for :

"TRUTH, CRUSHED TO EARTH, SHALL RISE AGAIN."

It is within our power (Acts 5:3-4), to let the Lord dominate in our lives, or we can "give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27). It is an

everlasting shame when we cause people to laugh Jesus to scorn (Mk. 5:40). To be very sure, our adversary desires to snatch us away from the Saviour (Lk. 22:31), and he has many devices with which to allure us! In Acts 13:8, Paul bluntly told Elymas that he was a child of the devil for opposing the Scriptures. In Luther's famous song we're told :

“For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power is great,
And armed with cruel hate:
On earth is not his equal.”

The subtle snare of Satan (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 3:7), can even cause us to be our own spiritual enemy (2 Tim. 2:25), as we do the very things we know we should not (Rom. 7). When we come to the end of our sojourn upon this earth, and reflect back over the events of our life, we will regret those moments we spent hindering God's plan for us. In 1600, John Donne spoke of “My play's last scene...My pilgrimage's last mile,” and each of us is heading in that direction. When we stand before our Maker in judgment, will we be able to say, “This is the day we have waited for”? Or will demons in hell shout with glee: “This is the day we have waited for”?

Let us never conduct ourselves in such a way as to give comfort to the enemy!

WILL THERE BE ANY STARS IN MY CROWN?

Joe Nichols

The above question has been with us from childhood in a well used hymn. From a study of the scriptures one concludes that the idea of receiving a crown is very much taught but in regard to the stars in the crown, others truths taught in the scriptures must be

incorporated into the picture to draw such a conclusion. From a receiving stand-point, however, the crown would be enough but enhancing it with more stars would be much better.

Paul teaches, in Phil. 4:1, "Therefore, my brethren beloved and longed for, my joy and crown..." that brethren were his crown in the sense that they gave glory or honour to his work. According to the apostle Peter, elders, upon faithful service would receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away. I Peter 5:4. Paul in his closing remarks to the young evangelist, declares, "For I am already being offered and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: hence forth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; (now note) and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing." II Tim. 4:6-8.

In James 1:12, we read, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord promised to them that love him." The brethren of Smyrna were told by Lord, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life." Rev. 2:10. Jesus warned in speaking to the church in Philadelphia, "I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast that no one take thy crown." Rev. 3:11. Good advice for each of us.

This crown of life should be our most treasured possession. It's waiting for each of us at the end of the road of faithfulness. Will there be any stars? We might say, "The crown will be enough." But, a few stars will be all right.

Sin Is Sin

J.V. Copeland, Jr.

The way some people look at things indicates that all do not see the same side of everything, consequently, they do not see it alike.

Reminds me of the four people who described an elephant in four different ways. These four were blindfolded and were told to approach the object, then describe it. One happened to get the tail. He said the elephant was like a rope, round and long. Another felt the side of the elephant. He said it was like a wall. The third felt the snout and said it was round, big on one end and small on the other end. The fourth got hold of a tusk and said it was hard, smooth and sharp on the end.

Each description told something about an elephant but neither fully described it. Some are inclined to think of sin similarly. However, sin is sin, whether in my life or your life. God sees sin the same in me or in you. David could see sin as horrible in another. It was not until Nathan, the prophet, brought the message to David personally, that he could see his sin was just as bad in himself as it would be in another.

Sin is sin whether at home, or away from home. Whether in the United States or in Africa or in India. God sees sin the same in all parts of the world. The prodigal evidently thought that by getting away from home, he could do anything, and it would be okay. He finally came to realize that what he did away from home was sin. He came to himself, repented of his sin, and was received back by his father.

Sin is sin, whether committed by youth or adults, old or young. Some are inclined to think that sin in youth should be overlooked because they are young and that when they get older they will grow out of it. This philosophy is not in keeping with the Scriptures. The Lord admonishes, "Remember also thy creator in the days of thy youth" (Eccl. 12:1).

Sin is sin whether committed by a leader of a congregation (church) or by another member of the congregation. Manasseh became King of Judah at age 12 (2 Chron. 33:1). Yet he sinned in following after the abominations of the nations whom Jehovah cast out before Israel. Though a king, though he was young, what he did was a sin in the sight of God.

Diotrephes was a leader in the church, yet he was rebuked for his unchristian conduct. (3 John 9). No Christian, even leaders, are to be looked down upon because they sin. But anyone who sins is to be reckoned with that he/she may be brought to repentance, thus saved in eternity.

When anyone, young or old, leader or not, teacher or pupil, is reckoned with because of sin, it does not mean they are looked down upon or considered as one to be shunned by other members of the Body of Christ.

The Holy Spirit teaches clearly in Gal. 6:1 that when one is overtaken in a fault, one who is spiritual (anyone, elder, preacher, teacher or any brother in Christ) is to go help that one and restore him/her in a spirit of gentleness.

I do not know, neither have I ever known a true brother in Christ to look down on a brother whom he was trying to help because he (the other brother) had been overtaken in a sin.

May everyone of us who try to help and strengthen a fellow Christian, who has sinned, take heed first to our own selves and be sure our attitude is right and our purpose always is to save the one who has sinned and to build him up in the Lord.

BOLDNESS

Jim Woodell

Peter and John healed a lame man as they entered the temple grounds through the gate called Beautiful. This man walked, leaped and praised God. His commotion drew a crowd of people who immediately recognized who he was. As the crowd was gathering Peter and John stopped on Solomon's porch to explain that this healing was not of their doing but was a work of God. The same God who had raised Jesus from the dead had been res-

possible for the healing of the lame man. Peter used the opportunity to tell the people that they had been witnesses of the resurrection. Acts 3:1-15.

The Sadducees, who denied any resurrection were grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. Acts 4:2. Peter and John were arrested but not before 5,000 men had heard the word and believed, Acts 4:4. The next day they were called before the Sanhedrin council to give an accounting of their activities. Peter again preached through Jesus the resurrection. Acts 4:7-12.

The Council took note of the boldness of Peter and John. It was apparent to them that this boldness did not come through education but through association. They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. Acts 4:13. The Sanhedrin then conferred among themselves as to how they could stop this movement. The consensus was that they could stop the spread of this movement among the people by stopping them from speaking, Acts 4:15-17, thus they called Peter and John forth and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus, Acts 4:18. Peter and John responded by saying that their refusal to speak would constitute disobedience to God. They further said, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Acts 4:20. Being released to go back to their company they reported what the chief priest and elders had said unto them, Acts 4:23. Immediately they prayed. To God they prayed, "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness we may speak thy word." Acts 4:29. The Bible says, "And when they had prayed...They spake the word of God with Boldness." Acts 4:31.

God has designed it so that the spread of Christianity will take place when the word is spoken. Boldness may be defined as the unembarrassed freedom of speech. They said, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Acts 4.20. They knew there was salvation in no one but Jesus, Acts 4:12. If they had stopped speaking the spread of the gospel would have stopped with them. You would not be a Christian today if someone had

not spoken to you. Faith comes by hearing the word of God, Rom. 10.17. There is no other way.

“WHAT THEN SHALL THIS CHILD TURN OUT TO BE?”

Tom McLemore

There is a little song that my wife taught to our son as soon as he was old enough to understand. It follows this idea: “Whatever I will be when I grow up I’ll be a Christian first when I grow up.” This reminds us of the words that the people of John the Baptizer’s community said when he was born. The story goes like this: In Luke 1, Zacharias was given assurance of the birth of a child to him and his wife. The angel Gabriel told him that he would be silent and unable to speak until the child was born. During the time of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, Zacharias was mute. On the eighth day after the child was born, they came to circumcise him, intending to name him “Zacharias” after his father. Elizabeth said, “No, his name shall be called John.” They then made signs to the child’s mute father as to what he desired him to be called. He asked for a tablet and wrote “His name is John.” At once Zacharias’ mouth was opened and he praised God. The Bible says that these events were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea. They that were present and saw these events kept them in mind and were saying, “WHAT THEN SHALL THIS CHILD TURN OUT TO BE?” for they knew that the hand of the Lord was with him.

This is a question that could be asked at the birth of any child. However, the answer could be any number of things. Most likely, a general answer would be “He will turn out to be what he is trained and taught to be.” The question then becomes “Will he be trained to be a faithful Christian, dedicated to the service of Christ?” Or “Will he be trained to be a lukewarm, faithless, and reprobate Christian?” Or “Will he be trained to be no Christian at all?” All of these have turned out to be the answer to the

question in one case or another. We observe children who have been faithful Christian from their youth up. We also observe children who have grown up to be indifferent, unconcerned, undedicated "Christians." We have also observed children who never became Christians, even though their parents had claimed to be. For a great part, in these last two situations lie the reason for the church's not having grown as it could have.

It seems that the basic solution to this dilemma lies in two areas: First, parents must realize their responsibility to their children to "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." (Eph. 6 : 4.) They must take the initiative while the child is in the formative years of life to "train up a child in the way he should go," so that "even when he is old he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22 : 6.) Second, children must take advantage of their opportunity to "Remember also your creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you shall say, 'I have no delight in them'," (Eccl. 12 : 1.) If these two areas do not have this emphasis, the day will come when both parents and children look upon the past years of their lives and say, "I have no delight in them."

"Whatever, I will be when I grow up, I'll be a Christian first when I grow up!"

Know The Bible

Marvin Rainy

WILL THE GOOD PEOPLE OF ALL CHURCHES BE SAVED? This is a question that should demand our serious thinking. Many without thinking about this question will answer "Yes", all good people regardless of what church they are a member of will be saved". Some will even say that all good people will be saved if they are not a member of any church. Some will say, "Isn't it wonderful to be able to join the church of

your choice". Others are disturbed and even confused concerning the multiplicity of churches, but the popular solution in our day is to consider all churches right and from among them to choose the one that appeals most to one's own taste. There was a time when religious debates were very common and brought out large crowds. Each church was trying to prove it was right. These days are gone. The feeling of modern man is that it does not matter much which of the churches you join, just so you join one of them with honest motives.

The very idea of a multiplicity of church and of different doctrines is foreign to the Word of God. On one occasion Jesus asked: "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" Then he asked, "But who say ye that I am?" "Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus responded, "Upon this rock (the bed-rock fact that Jesus was the Son of God) I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:13-18). Notice that Jesus speaks of his church in the singular, giving no hint that he approved of the idea that his kingdom would be divided into many groups. Just a few hours before he was betrayed by Judas, Jesus spent some time in prayer. In John 17:20, 21 he prayed, "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me". Christ prayed for all to be one. Do you hear this prayer? This prayer has largely gone unheeded even by those who have called themselves Christians. The Apostle Paul also said: "There is one body..." (Eph. 4:4). The body is the church. To be saved we must be in the church Jesus purchased with his blood (Acts 20:28).

"LORD, WHAT ABOUT JOHN?"

Maxie B. Boren

Shortly before Jesus ascended back to the Father, He informed Peter that he would die a martyr's death through which God

would be glorified. Read *John 21: 18-19*. Nothing indicates that Peter questioned or challenged what the Saviour said. He evidently was willing to accept this as the cost of discipleship.

But noticing John, his longtime friend, associate, and fellow-apostle, Peter inquired of Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" Verse 21, NASV. Did Peter ask about John out of mere curiosity? Or was his inquiry prompted by genuine love and concern for John and his welfare? Or was his question motivated by a degree of evil--was he afraid that while he would die as a martyr, John might be spared?

We may prefer to think it was one of the first two possibilities suggested that caused Peter to ask the question, but most likely it was the latter motivation, or something similar. This seems reasonable to infer from the Lord's rebuke of Peter in Verse 22--"If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!"

Setting aside whatever might have motivated Peter to ask the question, I believe there is a great lesson in this content for every Christian. None of us can assess his (or her) future of responsibility and service on the basis of "what about John?" This is one of the most prevalent faults in the church today--measuring ourselves by what others do or don't do, instead of by what the Lord has said concerning discipleship!

We cannot afford to be overly concerned with what others are doing or failing to do. This is not to say we shouldn't have a healthy concern for others and be willing to encourage and exhort them all we can to faithfulness. But we must not end up excusing ourselves for failure to be dedicated followers of Jesus because we're so busy "watching and worrying about John."

The Bible teaches *INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY!* The Lord said to Peter, "Follow thou me!" In other words, "Peter, don't concern yourself fretting about John. You concern yourself with Peter! You just make sure that YOU follow me, and let John and me worry about John." We need to reflect often upon

such Scriptures as *II Corinthians 5 : 10* and *Romans 14 : 4, 12*.

Let each of us resolve to glorify God in life and in death. (Consider *Philippians 1 : 20b* and *Romans 14 : 8*). In order to do that, we must follow the Lord and not try to excuse ourselves by what others do or don't do. Let us work hard at freeing ourselves from the inclination to ask, "Lord, what about John?"

DAILY LIVING WITH CHRIST

Gene A. Ellmore

"I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I DIE DAILY" (I Cor. 15 : 31).

The secret of Paul's dynamic power to appeal to men was the fact that he put himself in the place of death every day. He believed strongly in a just cause. He became an outstanding defender of Christianity. It was manifestly apparent to men of high estate and low degree that he had won the conquest over self-life and had truly entered into the abundant life of service for Christ.

Paul describes this victory and its happy results in a statement to the Galatians on justification by faith. "I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2 : 20). Paul was crucified daily by being one with Christ on a daily basis. Physically, when man was created, God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul". (Gen. 2 : 7). Spiritually, when man is re-created or reconciled to God, he is crucified or dead to sin--the old life is inactive; a new life, Christ becomes alive and active within him. Christ living in me motivates and energizes me to follow his blessed teachings, to imitate His gracious ways, and to hold Him aloft that others may see him as my Supreme Example.

Christ living within Paul did not exempt him from the daily temptations common to all Christians. "When I would do good, evil is present with me" (Rom. 7 : 1). Yet, he had died to sin and it no longer "reigned in his mortal body, that he should obey the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6 : 12). This aliveness in the presence of sin but apart from its reigning nature was made possible through Jesus Christ. So, when man is confronted by sin and temptation, he must turn to Christ who has dealt with it. The security of the faithful is found in the statement : "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8 : 36, 37).

Paul was mature in Christ. He could have boasted that he was privileged to lead the first convert in Europe to Christ (Acts 16 : 14, 15). He could have taken great delight in announcing that it was through himself that God first revealed the mystery "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs." Rather, Paul says : "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6 : 14).

Daily living with Christ is a daily death to sin and self, letting Christ live in me. This is how I can "do all things through Christ which energizes me" (Phil. 4 : 13).

THE LORD'S CHURCH— THE VINEYARD

Paul Epps

"And he spake many things to them in parables, saying, Behold the sower went forth to sow, and as he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside...and others fell upon the rocky places...and others fell upon the thorns...and others fell upon the good ground." (Matthew 13 : 3-8).

In discussing the nature of the church, we find it to be a

vineyard. In a vineyard there are several items to be observed, namely, the sowing of the seed, labourers, the place of labour, fruit to be borne, and the reward at the end of the day.

Sowing the seed is the first thing to consider. The church is the sowing agency today. God has not delegated this responsibility to any other institution *Philippians 1 : 4-5, I Timothy 3 : 15*. The seed which we are to sow in the hearts of people is the word of God (*Luke 8 : 11*), the gospel. We are not to sow philosophy; neither are we to sow the current events of the day. Only the words of the gospel will save. (*Matthew 15 : 9*).

Next, we must consider the labourers. Every member of the Lord's church in every locality is to be a labourer in the Vineyard. In the 21st chapter of Matthew we read the story of the two sons who were asked by their father to go work in his vineyard. There is the divine call—"go work"; there is the divine relationship—"son"; there is the divine time—"today"; and there is the divine place—"in my vineyard." In the day of judgment we can not give an excuse of not being asked to go work. The question is, are we ready to be used ?

The place of labour is in the church, the vineyard. The child of God has entered the church through the new birth (*John 3 : 3, 5*). And the only workers in the vineyard are God's children. If we do not meet the challenge, it will not be met, hence souls will be lost throughout eternity because we were idle. The apostle Paul wrote, unto him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus." (*Ephesians 3 : 21*).

Fruit is to be borne for God. Jesus said, "herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." (*John 15 : 8*). If we do not try to bear fruit, we shall become a fruitless Christian. Jesus said, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away..." (*John 15 : 2*). How sad !

There shall be the reward at the end of the day. Jesus said, "Call the labourers, and pay them their hire." (*Matthew 20 : 8*). The reward of the saved is heaven with all of its blessings. We can, with the apostle Paul, say "there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness..." (*2 Timothy 4 : 8*).

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Jo-Ann Upton

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